

Community Health Center, Inc.

Testimony Submitted to Public Health Committee
By Dr. Veena Channamsetty
Chief Medical Officer of the Community Health Center, Inc.
Middletown, Connecticut
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Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Johnson, members of the Public Health Committee, good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to testify concerning the role of medical assistants at outpatient clinics and physicians offices. I am Dr. Veena Channamsetty. I am a family medicine physician, and serve as the Chief Medical Officer of the Community Health Center, Inc. I am here to testify in favor of SB 459, AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAL ASSISTANTS.

For over forty years, CHC has provided efficient world quality care to underserved populations in Connecticut. We have achieved this by a relentless focus on the quality and safety of our comprehensive primary care services. Our entire staff is essential to this effort. Our clinical staff at all levels are highly trained, well supervised, and regularly evaluated to ensure competency in each element of their work.

Today I am here to speak specifically about the critical, and currently underutilized, role of medical assistants in primary care. Across the country, here in Connecticut, and at CHC, medical assistants are essential to the patient centered medical home model. They interact with every medical patient at each visit to assess vital signs,

conduct laboratory tests, perform screening assessments for smoking and depression, and order preventive tests under standing orders. In the majority of states in the US, medical assistants also administer medications, including vaccinations.

It is time to allow medical assistants in Connecticut to add medication administration, under the supervision of licensed independent providers who are legally eligible to order, prescribe and administer medication in Connecticut. This includes MDs, APRNs, CNMs, and PAs. We support the certification, education, and training requirements detailed in the Bill for medical assistants who take on the responsibility of administering medication and we remind the Committee that in primary care, all primary care providers—MDs, APRNs/NPs, CNMs, and PAs must be allowed to supervise and order this function of the medical assistant.

By allowing staff to work to the full extent of their training, we ensure that each member of the team is responsibly contributing to access, quality, and safety. This bill allows nurses to focus on those aspects of care delivery and care coordination that requires the training and education of a nurse.

The idea of using medical assistants to administer vaccinations is nothing new or out of the ordinary. In fact, they were allowed to do so under the direction of a physician for many years in Connecticut. Today's medical assistant, having completed a formal program and achieved certification as a medical assistant, is

ready now to resume this vital function.

CHC places a priority on ensuring full adherence to CDC and DPH guidelines for immunizations and vaccines and trains clinical staff intensively in this domain. Last year, CHC saw over eighty thousand different patients and administered over forty thousand vaccinations. As newly insured patients under the Affordable Care Act begin receiving important preventative care, including vaccinations, CHC expects to hire not only more doctors and nurses, but also more medical assistants who have received their training here in Connecticut. This bill will further enable such qualified staff and use them to the full extent of their training and licensure.

As we move forward with health reform, innovation, and transformation, this bill will contribute to all our goals of better health, and safe, high quality care delivered as efficiently as possible.

Thank you for your consideration on this important topic. We urge you to pass SB 459, AN ACT CONCERNING MEDICAL ASSISTANTS.